74, Abbey Street, Dublin
August 11 - 1870

My dear Mr May

It is a very long time since I heard from you or any of your family, to whom I am so greatly indebted & who are so continually in my thoughts. Whenever American letters come I look with longing eyes for the Leicester post mark or the familiar hand writing — but nothing comes. The last letter I had from Mrs May was written in March, from you on the 14th of April, from Ada on the 1st of May, now nearly three & a half months ago. Of all my more intimate American friends your family is the only one I have not heard from in all that time. Frank Garrison in one of his late letters telling me something of those I would like to hear of he said that Ada was with her grandmother in Brookline — & this is the last I have heard of you for ever so long. I have thought you had probably your hands full after your father's death — or with your summer hospitalities — or with the lassitude of the season, which I believe has been extremely hot with you — In short I have been ready to fancy anything rather than to admit the fear that you are tired of my letters now that I am so far removed out of your way. The social intercourse I had with my American friends was so delightful and so exactly to my taste that I often say if I could only combine their society with just such weather as we have had for the last 6 weeks & with tolerably good health, I could imagine no more enviable terrestrial combination. Perhaps I might omit the penultimate word of 4 syllables, for I have no talent for imagining that of which I have had absolutely no experience.

We have had an extraordinary fine summer – a clear sky ~~for~~ since the beginning of July & longer – very little rain – & the temperature ranging between 70° & 80°. People complain greatly of the heat – but I luxuriate in it. It is just what I like. No chill. No wretched cold feet to which I am so liable. For myself I wd like it to last for ever. The prospects of the country are very good in every respect except that the grass is greatly burned up & that hay is scarce & dear – but the crops will I expect be beautiful & fruit is plentiful. Dublin looks its very best with all this sunshine

About 4 weeks after her return ~~to Dublin~~ Deborah went down to Waterford to her cousins the Harveys. Mrs Harvey & Mrs Palmer are her mother's sisters. There are two young men & five girls, the eldest of these is married & has a baby which is the ~~centre~~ object of great admiration & nursing & petting. They live in a very pretty house within a mile of Waterford. There are gardens, & flower plots, shrubberies & fields, all laid out with great taste. Mrs H. is an interesting woman & her daughters bright lively girls — only middling quakers as to dogma like their mother, but having got a refined quaker rearing. The ~~ed~~ elder son wonderfully clever, brusque, eccentric & full of useful knowledge — the younger not so remarkable but like my son Alfred intensely radical & destructive, almost I mean but not quite as bad in going too far.

Along with Deborah were the two [illegible] cousins who accompanied her to Ireland & who are enjoying themselves immensely at the houses of their ~~[illegible]~~ mother's relations & at the seaside. Such a time as they have in this charming weather & such freedom from the fierce heat of Ohio & the hot hard work of their Ohio farm. This has been sold. Mr [illegible] is teaching or waiting for pupils in Salem. The 2 sons looking round for a settlement in

Colorado & Kansas — but they incline most to Ohio & their friends there. In Salem they have some dear friends — especially Marian R. & Mrs Robinson, most excellent people. Mrs R. was like a mother to the Salem girls & Deborah. Miss Mumford in Detroit, Miss Bowman in Philadelphia, & the Sisters have a kind of sisterly regard for D. & their friendship will I think greatly add to the happiness of her life, now that she has lost her sister. I wish Ada had some love to spare from Leicester & that D. may like to add her to the number — or that there was any chance of our seeing any of you here.

We are now living at 137. Leinster Road — but our landlord to whom we pay about $350 rent is a close fisted fellow, & refuses to get some painting done to the house which it requires after 6 years occupancy — & so as our term will be up next month, we think of changing our residence — but are not yet sure. Meanwhile 72. Abbey Street — or simple R. D. Webb, Dublin — will find me. I have lived in Dublin nearly 66 years & there should be no trouble in making me out.

I am vexed by that blot. I beg you will not notice it. It is long before one wd be seen on a letter of yours.

Ms. B.1.6 v.15. p.132

The Society of Friends have had a great "going on" lately in Dublin. In my time they have changed amazingly. They have given up most of their external peculiarities of dress & speech, they say little or nothing of their cardinal doctrine of the Inward Light, they have become intensely orthodox, they advocate missions to the heathen, Sabbath schools & very many are given to singing hymns, music is not denounced, &c. They are far less exclusive & are more like other people. They are practically far more liberal — & yet they are still bigotted but in a different way from formerly.

Well ~~they~~ those engaged in Sunday School teaching held a great Conference a year ago in Birmingham when the Friends there exhibited great hospitality to visitors from Ireland & from other parts of ~~[illegible]~~ England & Scotland. This year the Conference was held in Dublin & the Dublin friends called upon all their members who had houses to invite as many of the visitors from England as they could find beds for — & they nobly responded to the call. Some took 1, 2, 3, ~~4~~, 5, 6, 7 every number up to 15 & rich men paid hotel bills for as many as 100 who could not be lodged elsewhere. Even known heretics like Alfred & me became hospitable & lodged our quota.

Contrary to the usual practice of Friends in these special meetings, the Conference was open to all who came, & one outsider with more zeal than diffidence proposed that none shd not be allowed to act as teachers who had not had an assurance of salvation, & that any such who had been hitherto employed shd be dismissed.. A special sitting was set apart to the discussion of this proposition & as it promised to be exciting I attended for the first & only time. The result was satisfactory — the scheme of the Pharisee was indignantly scouted, especially by the English members — among whom there are many with far more pluck & intelligence than the Irish. Indeed in England & especially in Manchester there is a majority who claim large liberty of thought & language & are looked with suspicion & anxiety by "the body" of the society, & will be disowned if they can manage it. The arch heretic is an Irishman long resident in England. I know him very well.

The convention was followed by a Pic Nic party to a magnificent Demesne about 40 miles from Dublin by rail. The place is called Beaupare. The river Boyne flows between high [illegible] wooded banks adorned with noble [illegible] trees & shrubs in great variety. The Camping ground was [illegible] about 10 furlongs from the entrance & consisted of a rising bank near the river. It was lately mown & was large enough to accommodate all the excursionists — about 500 in number.

There were a few greyheads & greybeards like my own — a number of middle aged people of both sexes — but the majority were young men & women with a few young children. Each party brought its own dinner which was eaten al fresco, but the tea was furnished & included in the 5 shillings or 1.50 which paid for the ticket taken by each individual. The day was lovely & the satisfaction very great with the whole affair. Only think of 560 in one party. I never saw the like before & never hope to see such another.

Deborah did not come. She is not a good walker & would have been quite unable for so much walking as was indispensable. I generally go into town by omnibus about 10 or 11 & come out to dine at 3 & spend the evening with her. Her cousins Edmund & Isabella Harvey are staying with us for a while. Isabella is an industrious, unaffected, helpful housekeeper & most amiable & useful — just such a one as would delight in & look up to.

In all the pulling & hauling & regulating after so long an absence from a home of my own I have been embarrassed by the accumulation of books & have pretty much made up my mind to buy no more for my own use — but to sell & give away a good many I now possess. I have two large book-cases full beside quantities stowed away in holes & corners. If you think my file of the Liberator from vol. 11 to the end & nearly complete for so much — & of the Standard from the beginning but with some gaps, w^d be valued by any of your public libraries & could be imported free of charge by some American ship. I would be glad to send them. They w^d be more useful & more valued there than here. I am increasingly impressed by the shortness of the horizon of men & nations. They care little ~~that~~ for anything that lies beyond. It is wonderful how little. What an infinite multitude of questions that interest you are hardly heard of or cared for here — & vice versa. So it is & must be & ought to be all the world. Still I am often amazed at the apathy & ignorance of those around me on matters connected with America. As to myself from the experience I have had you are never long out of my thoughts or D[illegible] — & American letters are our chief luxuries.

Now like a good man as you are, will you not write to me? I need not say how glad I should be to hear from Mrs May or Ada or Miss Bertody or Miss Partridge, or Mr Emerson, or the Man of Sin Weiss or anybody from Leicester which I regard as a kind of Massachusetts Paradise for it is connected with my pleasantest recollections of America. Is Mr Emerson still alive? If so say I often think of him. I am ever yours affectionately & gratefully

Richd D. Webb

You hear all of the war from the telegrams

Tell me about the Great Man at the Navy Yard.

How is your mother bearing her widowhood?

MS. B.1.6 v.15, p.82